

Forth Estuary Transport Authority

17 December 2010

Present:–

The City of Edinburgh Council – Councillors Wheeler (Convener), Lord Provost Grubb, MacKenzie and Work.

Fife Council – Councillors Chisholm, Martin, Rumney and Walker.

Perth and Kinross Council – Councillor Robertson.

West Lothian Council – Councillor Day.

1 Chairman's Statement

Councillor Wheeler, as Convener, referred to the retirement at the end of year of Tom Aitchison, Chief Executive of the City of Edinburgh Council and of FETA. He wished to record the Board's thanks to Mr Aitchison for his service to the authority over the years.

Decision

To formally record the Board's appreciation of the work done by Tom Aitchison, the retiring Chief Executive on behalf of the Forth Estuary Transport Authority and the former Forth Road Bridge Joint Board.

2 Minute

Decision

The minute of the meeting of the Forth Estuary Transport Authority of 29 October 2010 was approved as a correct record.

Matters Arising

(i) Forth Replacement Crossing and Maintenance Responsibility – Meeting with Minister

The Convener referred to the recent resignation of Stewart Stevenson MSP as Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change and replacement by Keith Brown MSP. With a view to maintaining a dialogue

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with the Scottish Government, he suggested that he should write on behalf of the Board to the new Minister, inviting him to meet with representatives of the Board at a future date.

Decision

To agree the Convener should write to Keith Brown MSP as the new Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change to suggest a meeting with representatives of the Board at a suitable date.

(ii) Main Cable Project – Award Submission

The Communications Manager reported on industry recognition for the main cable project, the project having been short-listed in four categories at the British Construction Industry awards, and with commendation from the Saltire Society, and others. Noted.

3 Comprehensive Spending Review 2010/Scottish Budget 2011/12

The Treasurer reported that Transport Scotland had now issued proposed Scottish Government budget allocations for FETA for 2011/12, as follows:-

Capital Expenditure	£10m
Revenue Expenditure	£5.1m

Ministers had decided to issue a one year only settlement and Transport Scotland had emphasised the necessity of FETA preparing for a comprehensive spending review in 2011. They had indicated that it was likely that the availability of resources would be significantly more restricted in the coming years.

The Treasurer said that the settlement for revenue expenditure was in line with the indicative budget for 2011/12 and therefore would allow the authority to operate and maintain the Bridge at anticipated levels. The capital settlement, at £10m, was below the indicative budget for 2011/12, but was sufficient to fund the revised capital works programme as had been earlier been reported to the Board.

It was the intention now to prepare a detailed one year revenue and capital budget for 2011/12, for consideration by the Board at its next meeting on 25 February 2011. An indicative budget for 2012/13 would also be prepared but would be subject to any spending review discussions with Transport Scotland. The authority would require to discuss with Transport Scotland the contracts that were due to be progressed during 2011/12 and beyond but where no funding commitments were in place beyond the one year settlement. Amongst

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others, it was planned that the contracts for the main cable inspection and anchorages investigation be awarded in 2011.

Decision

- 1) To note the Scottish Government proposed allocations for 2011/12 of £5.1m for revenue expenditure and £10m for capital expenditure.
- 2) To note that a draft budget for 2011/12 and an indicative budget for 2012/13 would be submitted for the consideration of the Board at its next meeting on 25 February 2011.

(Reference – report by the Treasurer, 7 December 2010, submitted.)

4 Annual Audit Plan 2010/11

Audit Scotland had prepared an indicative plan for audit work to be carried out over the next year. Representatives of Audit Scotland were in attendance to speak to their report, a summary of the activities to be undertaken, and anticipated timescales for the areas of work.

Decision

To note the proposed Audit Plan for 2010/11 to be carried out by Audit Scotland.

(Reference – FETA Annual Audit Plan 2010/11 by Audit Scotland December 2010, submitted.)

5 Snow Closures

The Chief Engineer and Bridgemaster gave members an update on closure of the Bridge due to snowfall in December and associated traffic issues in the wider network. The Bridge had been closed due to snow for the first time in its history on 1 December 2010. On 6 December, the weather had again caused a southbound closure when gridlock on the wider roads network had caused traffic to back up onto the Bridge.

Staff had worked in very difficult conditions and throughout the night and the fact that the Bridge had been closed for around eight hours during a period of national difficulty reflected well on their efforts. The Chief Engineer and Bridgemaster reported that the authority had received good support from the local authority roads departments and had also engaged outside contractors to assist in the task.

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Regarding the Forth Road Bridge website, the surge in demand for information had provided a test of its ability to cope. By automatically diverting users to a special low-bandwidth site providing key information, the website was able to accommodate thirty times its normal visitor numbers, remaining accessible at all times. However, the low-bandwidth site did not include webcams, and analysis of the statistics had indicated that it might be worth investing in additional capacity to increase the number of visitors that could view the full website before the low-bandwidth website had to be used.

Decision

- 1) To note the report and ongoing work to enlarge the capacity of the website to cope with peak-load enquiries.
- 2) To approve a motion by the convener in terms as follows: 'To congratulate the staff who kept the Bridge open during the heavy snow in December, this made possible only through exceptional efforts, and to ask the Convener to write to them on behalf of the Board, in addition to any recognitions of efforts by the Chief Engineer and Bridgmaster.'

(Reference – report by the Chief Engineer and Bridgmaster, 17 December 2010, submitted)

6 Contact and Education Centre

The Board had agreed to offer land and access rights to Transport Scotland to construct a new building to operate both as a contact and education centre during the construction of the Forth Replacement Crossing, and as a visitors centre in the longer term.

The Chief Engineer now gave an update on negotiations and in particular on a new proposal that the building might also be used to house Traffic Scotland's National Control Centre. Two options were currently being discussed in broad terms –

- a) that the building serve as a Contact and Education Centre from 2012 until 2017, after which Traffic Scotland operate a National Control Centre from the site with a visitor facility included; or
- b) that the facility be enhanced and increased in size to include capacity for both the Contact and Education Centre and Traffic Scotland's National Control Centre from 2012 and with the operation of Traffic Scotland from 2017, again with a retained visitor facility included.

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The sale of the land, together with any other service agreements, was to be agreed by negotiation with Transport Scotland, following advice from the Solicitor and Treasurer to the Board. There were no funding implications for the authority as the costs of the new building and any minor modifications required to the existing administration building would be funded by Transport Scotland.

The Chief Engineer and Bridgemaster recommended that the Board approve:

- an increase in size of the proposed facility (but that the building be within the area already identified to FETA officials at the north-east corner of the car park).
- in principle, the proposed future use of the building as a Traffic Scotland National Control Centre and, if required, as Traffic Scotland's Network Operations Centre.
- the sale of the land required to build the centre and note that it would not revert back to FETA in 2017, on the basis that a strategic national use for it was to be established.
- the officers to negotiate agreements on car park leasing, rights of access and other service agreements, and
- part of the existing Forth Road Bridge administration building undergoing minor modifications to allow its use as a temporary Contact and Education Centre until construction of the new facility had been completed.

And, in addition, that the Board note -

- that a pre-emption would still apply to ensure that the facility could not be sold onto another party without FETA having a right of refusal, and
- that further design details would be shared with the Board as they became available.

Decision

- 1) To approve the recommendations by the Chief Engineer and Bridgemaster, as submitted, and welcome the proposal to locate Traffic Scotland's National Control Centre within the new building.
- 2) To note that consideration would be given to any Network Rail involvement, post-2017, as regards the use as a visitor centre.

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- 3) To note the need for early resolution of issues regarding longer term responsibilities for the centre, as would require to be raised in any future meeting with the Minister.
- 4) To emphasise the need for quality of design and Feta involvement at design stage.

(Reference – report by the Chief Engineer and Bridgemaster, 17 December 2010, submitted)

7 Pier Defences – Cathodic Protection

(The Committee resolved that this item be taken in private on the grounds that it was likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 12 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.)

The Chief Engineer and Bridgemaster gave an update to members in regard to action being taken to protect the authority's interests in regards to intended court proceedings concerning the design and installation of the Cathodic Protection system related to the pier defences. Court Proceedings had been initiated on behalf of the Authority but efforts would still be made to try to resolve the matter through mediation.

The Authority had also engaged a consulting engineer to report on the extent of remedial works necessary and including upgrading to the existing protections system. A sum of £500,000 had been included in the capital plan to cover costs associated with the main tower pier defences for the years 2010/11 and 2011/12: this sum would be monitored and might need to be revised to cover costs incurred during any court proceedings.

Decision

- 1) To note the update in regard to legal proceedings as reported by the Chief Engineer and Bridgemaster.
- 2) To note that some upgrading works would require to be made to the existing Cathodic Protection system in addition to the remedial works.
- 3) To note the sum included in the capital plan to cover costs of repairs and remedial work and that this would be monitored and reported further to the Board.

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(Reference – report by the Chief Engineer and Bridgemaster, 17 December 2010, submitted.)

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